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Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

Americas and the Caribbean region

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major country programme evaluations, specifying, *inter alia*, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The MTRs and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1999.

Introduction

1. This report summarizes the 1999 mid-term reviews (MTRs) of the country programmes for Argentina, Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama and Uruguay. The MTRs represent a review of half of the cooperation programmes in the region, and are the first reviews to assess country programmes based on a child rights strategy. This report also describes a sample of evaluations carried out during the year.

Country mid-term reviews

Argentina

2. Argentina is the leading programme of the Southern Cone area office, which also includes Chile and Uruguay. Each of the three countries conducted an MTR, based on a common business plan, whose goal is the development of programmes financed by locally raised funds. The MTR for Argentina was held in September 1999, following several months of consultations with government authorities at national,

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provincial and municipal levels. This review process led to summary discussions — within UNICEF and with the Government — on the evolving role of UNICEF in a middle-income "country in transition". In Argentina, as well as in the other two countries, there were changes in government shortly after the completion of the MTR process.

3. **The situation of children and women**. The Argentinean economy has grown by 35 per cent since 1990. A present, annual per capita income is approximately $9,000, more than twice the average for other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the 1998/99 world financial crisis had a strong impact on the economy, causing per capita gross domestic product (GDP) to fall by 4.5 per cent during 1999. This affected the public deficit and may eventually lead to a reduction in expenditures on social services.

4. Argentina has already achieved, or is en route to achieving, many of the goals of the World Summit for Children. The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) declined from 29 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 22 per 1,000 in 1998. Net primary school enrolment is relatively high, at 95 per cent for both boys and girls. Nonetheless, these achievements have not benefited all children equally; there are vast disparities in social indicators among children from different income groups. Child labour has become a major issue in Argentina, affecting approximately 250,000 children under the age of 14. Official statistics grossly underestimate many forms of child labour, particularly in rural areas. Poverty is persistent and widespread, affecting one third of the population and approximately 45 per cent of all children. One of the most important structural causes of poverty is growing income inequality. At present, the poorest 40 per cent of the population receive less than 15 per cent of total income.

5. **Achievements and constraints**. The programme was instrumental in promoting legislative, judicial and institutional reform in several provinces, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) has continued to expand, with 26 hospitals certified as baby-friendly under a very rigorous process. Ten per cent of all births in Argentina now take place in baby-friendly institutions. Anaemia prevalence, affecting 65 per cent of children under the age of two, and 33 per cent of pregnant women, is recognized by the Buenos Aires provincial government as a major health issue and is being addressed. A UNICEF-promoted methodology for monitoring and auditing infant mortality has served as a basis for improved health care practices in three jurisdictions, leading to notable declines in infant mortality, which has encouraged other districts to adopt the new methodology. Water supply and sanitation projects have served as models for the design and implementation of projects in several provinces. UNICEF has drawn national attention to child labour and encouraged the formulation of a national labour pact calling for concerted action. However, fiscal and administrative difficulties of federal and provincial governments have been an important constraint in carrying out legal and institutional reforms to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Insufficient public health expenditures and varying levels of available financial and technical resources at the provincial and municipal levels have led to low-quality public health services.

6. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. In the current cycle of cooperation, UNICEF has focused its interventions in the provinces of Mendoza and Chaco, and in the municipality of Mendoza. The review concluded that although the range of project interventions represents an improvement in focus over the previous programme cycle, it is still too broad for effective management by a small office. While the visibility provided by service-delivery projects has undoubtedly contributed to the popular image of UNICEF in Argentina — and the development of a strong local donor base — such projects have little effect on the broader social changes required to influence the current and future situation of large numbers of children. Hence, the programme will give greater attention to issues that are fundamental for children's social inclusion, such as education, justice, violence against children and women, social welfare services and child labour.

7. Activities in legal reform were considered very successful. At minimal financial cost, the organization has become the principal advocate for child rights and a source of technical advice in this area. The programme has managed to open a non-partisan political debate the issue. Successful projects in institutional reform, decentralization of social services, auditing of infant mortality, skills training for adolescents, and reduction of child labour will be replicated in other localities.

8. Although the original programme structure was intended to foster integrated programme interventions, sectoral perspectives have persisted in much of UNICEF cooperation. While the structure as set forth in the country programme remains unchanged, it will be streamlined to integrate the rights approach into all areas and to include information and communication components, as well as fund-raising and programme strategies, in a mutually reinforcing way. Clear emphasis will be placed on mobilizing the Government and civil society to systematically apply financial, organizational and human resources to child rights issues. The review process also concluded that closer coordination with the national Government in programme activities is necessary.

9. **Country programme management plan**. The gradual reduction in general resources and the evolving programme profile of UNICEF in Argentina have led to changes in programme management. New staffing mechanisms need to be developed if UNICEF is to carry out its mission. Sharing of technical and operational resources among the three Southern Cone countries was deemed appropriate and should be continued. Within the office, the coherence and complementarity of programme communications, information and fund-raising strategies must be strengthened.

Belize

10. Planning for the MTR in Belize began in January 1999. From the outset, a government team headed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Youth worked with the UNICEF assistant representative and operations officer to plan and organize the MTR process. The Government took the lead in arranging and chairing all preparatory meetings at the political and technical levels. The Prime Minister addressed the MTR meeting on the role of the United Nations in Belize beyond the year 2000. The Children's Advisory Committee to UNICEF, a 12-member body which meets regularly with UNICEF staff, nominated 2 representatives to take part in the process.

11. The methodology included a series of technical meetings with partners to review achievements and constraints; a one-and-a-half day meeting to review policy, strategy and process; and a one-day meeting for visiting UNICEF officials to discuss the technical details of the programme in a more in-depth fashion with partners. Time was allotted for a round-table discussion about the future role and operational situation of UNCIEF in Belize. A post-review planning meeting was also held, to ensure appropriate follow-through.

12. **The situation of children and women**. The economy, which is vulnerable in its heavy reliance on agricultural goods for export, suffered a serious slowdown in 1998 due to difficulties in the sugar cane harvest and unfavourable conditions in the international citrus and banana markets. As a result, the trade deficit increased substantially and unemployment soared to 14.3 per cent. The Human Development Index ranks Belize below Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama, and above El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Although substantial gains have been made in reducing infant mortality and in increasing access to primary education, poverty affects one third of the population and there are vast inequalities in income distribution and in access to basic social services. Malnutrition among children prevails in some geographic areas, breastfeeding practice is low, and there are increasing levels of violence, crime and drug abuse among youth. Maternal mortality has increased slightly over the past few years, and coverage and quality of water and sanitation services remain low, particularly in the rural sector. Adolescent pregnancies and the spread of HIV/AIDS are among the most serious problems affecting children, adolescents and women in Belize.

13. **Achievements and constraints**. Over recent years, there has been substantial progress in launching an inter-ministerial committee to select which social indicators are monitored. A 1996 statistical profile has been published, and further profiles for 1997 and 1998 will be completed early next year. Sectoral monitoring systems are well developed in some cases (health), nearly non-existent in others (housing, water and environmental sanitation (WES)), and designed but poorly executed in yet others (education). Overall, there is a need for training of staff in certain ministries on, *inter alia*, database design and data collection. The Central Statistical Office is currently short-staffed and cannot offer the technical support needed, including monitoring of the UNICEF country programme.

14. Counterparts are satisfied with the type and quality of UNICEF assistance, and new approaches to resolving nationally important issues are being

developed. This is true in projects as divergent as the family court/family service project, community and parent empowerment, and other area-based work, and extends to the local non-governmental organization (NGO) community, with which the Government cooperates closely. Main constraints include tentative and ill-defined programme monitoring, and capacity issues that limit expansion.

15. The community and parent empowerment programme was slow to develop because of the many partners involved; as a result, however, there is strong commitment from all those participating. The Integrated School Health Initiative has also been slow to develop because of the complexity inherent in the programme. However, the integrated nature of the programme, bringing a number of government departments and NGOs together, has been a very positive factor.

16. Success has been achieved in promotion of legal and institutional reform, including: the drafting of a Children's Act; the passing of regulations for reporting child abuse; the ratification of the International Labour Organization Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour; and the preparation of draft regulations on fostering and adoption procedures, and on increasing the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 9. Extensive consultations were a key to much of this success, and efforts were made to inform both the Government and the opposition about country programme goals to ensure continuity. With legal reform, as with other aspects of the programme, the UNICEF strategy of having no direct involvement in implementation has led to total ownership of the programme by the Government.

17. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR endorsed the country programme, which is fully in tune with the UNICEF medium-term plan, the emerging issues and future action for children, and the child rights approach. Major highlights include social policy development and sustainability; legal and institutional reform; early childhood care for survival, growth and development; and community and parent empowerment. Further progress in these areas will depend on well-defined policies and programme strategies, with all partners working together in an environment of mutual respect. The MTR identified the following focus areas for future UNICEF cooperation: developing a comprehensive social sector database; stemming the HIV/AIDS epidemic; developing programmes for adolescents; and strengthening the role of men in the family. The future role of UNICEF was recognized as that of monitor of the situation of children vis-à-vis their rights, advocacy and lobbying; and as a networker of information.

18. **Country programme management plan**. Increasingly, the thrust of the country programme is advocacy and lobbying for children's rights — an issue that cuts across sectoral ministries and the government-NGO divide. UNICEF support for technical aspects of sectoral programmes will be phased out by the end of the programme cycle in December 2001. In the next country programme, changes will be implemented as a result of United Nations reform and the Common Country Assessment (CCA)/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. In addition, the participation of children and young people in all aspects of the country programme will be maintained and strengthened.

Chile

19. The MTR was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation. During the six-month process, committees of the Ministries of Justice, Education, Labour and Planning, as well as NGOs and United Nations agencies, reviewed sectoral programmes and projects. At the regional and local levels, the review involved local partners and members of civil society. The legal reform project was subject to an external evaluation. The conclusions of these sectoral and local review exercises were discussed during two review meetings in September 1999 with the coordinating ministries and the National Agency for International Cooperation.

20. **The situation of children and women**. Between 1990 and 1997, Chile's economy grew at an average annual rate of 7.8 per cent. At present, Chile boasts one of the region's highest per capita income ($5,260, versus the regional average of approximately $3,500). However, the effects of the Asian financial crisis on Chile's economy during 1999 brought into question the validity of the current development model. Although poverty dropped from over 40 per cent to only 22 per cent in 1998, poverty reduction rates slowed during 1999 and growing inequality remains a fundamental

problem. In 1998, the richest 20 per cent of the population received 57.3 per cent of the country's income, while the poorest 20 per cent received only 3.7 per cent.

21. Infant and child mortality rates are below 10 and 12 per 1,000 live births, respectively, and maternal mortality is 23 per 100,000 live births. The spread of HIV/AIDS remains under control and policies are in place to screen at-risk mothers and limit vertical transmission. Malnutrition among children has been eradicated, and approximately 45 per cent of all newborns are breastfed exclusively until sixth months of age.

22. Government spending on education has more than doubled since 1990. Access to basic education is near universal and high school enrolment is nearly 87 per cent. National averages, however, hide important inequities within and between regions. Child labour, violence against children, insufficient attention to adolescent health and participation, and the existing judicial system are major issues affecting children and adolescents.

23. **Achievements and constraints**. The country programme has played a crucial role in promoting and supporting processes leading to legal reform. Over the last two years, laws have been passed in: prohibition of imprisonment of children under 18 in adult prisons; abolition of distinctions between children born in and out of wedlock; regulation of adoption; and penalization of child abuse. Laws on family courts, subsidies to child care institutions, and adolescent penal responsibility are under discussion within the Ministry of Justice and Parliament. As a result of UNICEF-promoted activities, several fundamental issues affecting children and adolescents are being addressed, including child labour and the underlying causes of persistent inequalities in the education system.

24. The programme has been instrumental in informing and sensitizing families, the private sector and the mass media to the need to eliminate violence against children. UNICEF has promoted children's participation through the implementation of opinion polls with children and adolescents on such issues as child rights, education, intra-family relations and child-rearing practices. Following joint efforts between UNICEF, the Ministry of Health and the Catholic University, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months increased from 4.5 per cent in late 1980s to over 45 per cent today.

25. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR reiterated the overall strategic thrust as reflected in the country programme recommendation, which emphasized a mix of policy dialogue, advocacy, capacity-building and empowerment. However, as a result of the in-depth analysis of the role of UNICEF in Chile, the objectives, and to some extent the programme strategies, will be adjusted. In particular, the programme will be shifted to further mobilize the Government and civil society in favour of child rights and support to capacity-building in key public and private institutions that deal with children's issues. The programme will also focus on empowering families, children and adolescents to claim their rights; and on gradually ensuring that public policies integrate a child rights approach.

26. Rather than supporting selected poor municipalities through interventions targeting children, the second half of the programme will concentrate on the legal, institutional and programmatic reforms necessary to ensure that all children are able to exercise their rights. This will include a specific strategy to promote adolescent participation. The MTR concluded that the programme's social communication and media component should contribute to cultural change through substantive messages with strong technical and legal content.

27. **Country programme management plan**. As stipulated in Executive Board decision 1997/18, "Modified system for allocation of general resources for programmes" (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1), general resources for Chile are to be gradually reduced and the role of UNICEF in the country reassessed. This obliges office management to mobilize highly qualified staff capable of initiating and participating in policy dialogue and legal and institutional reform. Given that existing contracting and staffing modalities are not adequate to face these challenges, the Chile office has designed a business plan that will allow the establishment of a programme financed by funds raised locally.

Costa Rica

28. The MTR for Costa Rica was initiated in 1998 and concluded in August 1999. The aim of this long

process was to facilitate involvement of the new government authorities in the country programme and to develop, through consensus, a focus on a rights-based approach and the operationalization of recently approved legislation for children and adolescents. In December 1998, UNICEF formed a Country Commission to guide the MTR process. The Commission comprised representatives from the Directorate of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Division of Project Planning and Follow-up at the Office of the First Lady, the legal advisory body of the Presidential House, the Chancellor's Office at the University of Costa Rica, the Technical Secretariat of the National Council on Children and Adolescents, the Union of Private Institutions that Attend to Children, the Directorate of the Triangle of Solidarity Programme, and the municipalities of Puriscal and San José. From this group, a technical team was formed, including two government and two UNICEF representatives and a consultant hired to serve as general coordinator of the process. Ten workshops were held with different groups of counterparts (local authorities, United Nations agencies, and children and adolescents), through which the Master Plan of Operations (MPO) was formulated. The First Lady attended the closing ceremony, signing the final document on behalf of the Government. The process was designed to include the maximum participation of UNICEF counterparts. The success of the process has encouraged the continuation of the Country Commissions as a regular advisory body to the country programme.

29. **The situation of children and women**. Costa Rica is the only Central American country ranked in the high development group by the Human Development Index. With life expectancy of 76 and an adult literacy rate of 95 per cent, it is among the few countries in Latin America that have made substantial improvements in the living conditions of its population. Costa Rica has met the majority of the goals of the World Summit for Children, particularly those related to health and education. At present, the infant mortality rate (IMR) of 14.2 per 1,000 live births is among the lowest in the region and is one tenth the figure recorded in 1940. Approximately 85 per cent of all children under the age of one are immunized, trained personnel attend 98 per cent of all births, and only 6.6 per cent of newborns weigh less than 2,500 grams. Legal and institutional reform to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child is well under way. Poverty rates decreased from 31.9 per cent in 1991 to 19.7 per cent in 1998. If present trends continue, poverty will be reduced to 16 per cent in 2001. Nonetheless, inequalities in income distribution have continued to grow over the past years.

30. In spite of progress achieved in many fields, several problems persist and new ones have emerged. Maternal mortality has increased significantly over the past few years; the percentage of children and adolescents under 15 who work rose from 7.8 per cent in 1995 to 9 per cent in 1998; and violence against women and children and sexual commercial exploitation appear to be on the rise.

31. **Achievements and constraints**. The country programme has been sharpening its focus and a new organizational structure has been designed. This structure, which has been in existence under a year, consists of defining four coordinating counterparts and their implementing and fund-administering partners. It has led to greater transparency and participation in defining priorities and to greater coordination among the various entities.

32. As part of its work to implement the Child and Adolescent Code, Costa Rica has formed the National Council on Children and Adolescents. This body, along with the Local Protection Boards and Tutelary Committees, is working to ensure the effective operation of the National Comprehensive Protection System. UNICEF has lent its support to strengthening the system at both the national and local levels.

33. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR was a highly participatory process, helping the country take ownership of the programme. MTR recommendations suggested strengthening progress through national and local public policy formulation; knowledge acquisition (particularly in implementing a child rights approach); permanent monitoring of the situation of children; promotion of a culture based on rights; horizontal cooperation with other countries of the region; support to regional initiatives for the training of human resources; and support to resource mobilization for local and national policies on child and adolescent rights.

34. The MTR highlighted areas where the country office has a comparative advantage in child and adolescent rights, including its level of specialization and technical capacity, which allow it to generate and disseminate knowledge to promote understanding and

create awareness and sensitivity of the problems. Its credibility and autonomy have enabled it to bring actors together and to mobilize them in order to strengthen the institutional mechanisms governing social coordination and to develop agreements among actors. Another lesson learned from the MTR is that counterparts expect leadership from UNICEF in the area of rights, at the international, national, sectoral and local levels.

35. **Country programme management plan**. The MTR helped clarify the means and approach of UNICEF support and served as a guide for the country programme with regard to formulating policies on the comprehensive protection of rights, and the means to monitor and enforce those rights. This approach has helped in converting the office into a forum for a more systematic evaluation of the implications and demands of the rights-based approach.

36. There is now a broader definition of the office's role in technical support, and in the formulation of agreements with counterparts that can serve as a base for making actions sustainable. The achievements and limitations in programming, as well as in the financial and administrative execution by counterparts, have been highlighted. It was noted that there is a need for training, monitoring and evaluation, and the design of basic and simple instruments to strengthen programme coordination and execution within the office and in relation to counterparts. Finally, roles and responsibilities of country office staff have been redefined.

Cuba

37. Starting in December 1998, three major meetings were held, during which participants reached consensus on several issues concerning the programme of cooperation. An internal UNICEF workshop led to revisions in financial and operational implementation. MTR participants included ministerial counterparts at the highest level, other United Nations agencies, UNICEF personnel from other country offices in Latin America and the Caribbean, and children and adolescents belonging to different local organizations. The latter provided UNICEF with insights into a range of viewpoints on the organization's work in Cuba.

38. **The situation of children and women**. Cuba has made continuous efforts to maintain and improve the status of children, and has achieved two thirds of the World Summit for Children goals. Substantial progress has been made in improving children's health and nutritional conditions: immunization levels are at 98 per cent; neonatal tetanus and polio have been eradicated; measles cases and deaths have dropped to zero; use of oral rehydration therapy is at 85 per cent; all target hospitals have been declared mother- and baby-friendly; and the malnutrition rate for children under the age of one is 1.1 per cent. Similarly, goals in education have largely been met, although reduction in maternal mortality has yet to be achieved.

39. **Achievements and constraints**. The country programme has recorded several important achievements in health, nutrition, education and safe water and sanitation. The health programme focused on supporting the consolidation of government-sponsored primary health care services, and on educating communities to create healthful habits and to prevent sickness and disease. UNICEF interventions, including community and family participation as a major component, have yielded very positive results. Progress in health and nutrition indicators is impressive. Country programme support to activities in water supply and sanitation resulted in increased access to these services in rural and peri-urban areas. UNICEF has simultaneously supported education on hygiene practices among school children, as well as in communities.

40. Other achievements include the broadened scope of the non-formal early education programme, "Educate your Child". Through participatory, intersectoral strategies, the programme has expanded to reach 70 per cent of all children under the age of six. The success of this programme has encouraged its replication in other Latin American and Caribbean countries. Similarly, a UNICEF-supported programme on life skills now reaches the entire Cuban population.

41. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The review process concluded that programme objectives will remain valid in the coming years. Several adjustments will be made, however, to include new activities aimed at supporting the family and promoting the participation of children and adolescents. Another recommendation is the need to strengthen joint activities with other United Nations agencies. Specifically, UNICEF should participate in the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) municipal development initiative and work jointly with

the World Food Programme (WFP) on household food security programme.

42. **Country programme management plan**. Reviews concluded that programme objectives and strategies will continue to be valid for the remainder of the country programme. However, during the next biennium, the programme will include new activities as recommended by the MTR and will seek to strengthen links with other United Nations agencies.

Dominican Republic

43. The MTR process in the Dominican Republic included 13 meetings attended by 460 participants. The process was launched in May 1999 with a high-level meeting chaired by the main government counterpart, the National Planning Office (ONAPLAN), and attended by ministers, vice-ministers and heads of United Nations agencies and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The meeting secured commitments from government counterparts at the sectoral level. Projects staff also held meetings with their sectoral counterparts. In July, recommendations from the review process were shared, and progress towards the achievement of World Summit for Children goals was reviewed. The final MTR meeting was held in August 1999.

44. **The situation of children and women**. The economy of the Dominican Republic has been growing over the past few years; in 1999, per capita income grew by 5.3 per cent. However, economic prosperity has not benefited all population groups: unequal income distribution contributes to the persistence of widespread poverty. On average, only 6.8 per cent of government spending and 2.9 per cent of international technical cooperation is allocated to basic social services.

45. The IMR is 43 per 1,000 live births, well above the regional average of 32 per 1,000 live births. Only 54 per cent of the rural population has access to safe water and 73 per cent has access to sanitation. Net primary school enrolment is approximately 80 per cent. HIV/AIDS, child abuse, domestic violence, commercial trafficking and sexual exploitation of children are major problems affecting children and adolescents.

46. **Achievements and constraints**. There have been significant advances in the social policy and information project, and the number of Provincial Information and Statistics Offices has been expanded to cover 24 of the 30 provinces nationwide. Eighteen municipalities have been incorporated into the Child-Friendly Municipality initiative, with a commitment gradually to allocate 20 per cent of their investment budget to basic social services, as a local application of the 20/20 Initiative.

47. Legal and institutional reform, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has advanced considerably recently. A new Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents has been implemented, and specialized tribunals and courts for children have been created. Provincial Action Plans for Children are being implemented in nine provinces and drafted in four others. The education sector has seen the expansion of Multi-grade Innovative Schools and the pilot implementation of early childhood development strategies for children under five in five locations throughout the country.

48. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The vast majority of MTR recommendations fall into the following categories: inter-institutional coordination; capacity-building; programmatic implementation of the rights of the child; monitoring and evaluation; the use of information as an instrument for social mobilization; gender equality as a cross-cutting concern; and prevention of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Additional recommendations from internal discussions include: (a) the creation of a project aimed at providing basic social services in a decentralized fashion, as a strategy to accelerate the achievement of the World Summit goals (funding is already available from the United States Committee for UNICEF); (b) the establishment of two new posts, and the retooling of a third, to support the new project; (c) strengthening of coordination within the office; (d) fine-tuning of a monitoring and evaluation system; (e) increased use of the Programme Management System (PROMS) as a planning and monitoring instrument; and (f) provision of technical support in the definition of a private sector fund-raising strategy.

49. **Country programme management plan**. A major change instituted following the MTR was the creation of a new project for decentralization/ provincial action plans in favour of children, which has received financial commitment from the United States Committee for UNICEF. One national officer post in

nutrition will be abolished and a post in decentralization will be created at the same level. Efforts in the coming year will address the formulation of a new country programme for 2002-2007, with the completion of a situation analysis and support to the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) to assess progress towards the goals for the year 2000.

El Salvador

50. The MTR process involved a situation analysis; a national opinion survey; 11 thematic evaluation workshops; and two in-depth evaluations of the maternal and child health and nutrition subprogramme and the local defenders of child rights subprogramme. It also included the involvement of children and adolescents. The process greatly enhanced UNICEF positioning vis-à-vis the newly elected Government, as well as other counterparts, civil society organizations, NGO networks, the church, the mass media and the United Nations system.

51. **The situation of children and women**. Over the past three years, economic growth in El Salvador declined from 7 per cent to 2 per cent, and austerity policies have negatively affected coverage of basic social services. Approximately 45 per cent of families are poor, and women and children constitute a disproportionately high ratio. Poverty rates are higher in rural areas, but disparities are worse among urban population groups.

52. Throughout the 1990s, important improvements in the living conditions of children and adolescents were made, including increased immunization levels, a lower incidence of micronutrient deficiencies, and greater access to safe water and sanitation. Nonetheless, problems affecting children and adolescents continue, among them, physical and psychological violence; child labour; lack of healthy home environments, schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods; low levels of child rights awareness; high levels of malnutrition; teenage pregnancy; and maternal mortality. Although the Convention of the Rights of the Child was ratified in 1990, a large percentage of policy makers and families maintain a paternalistic and repressive attitude towards children and adolescents.

53. **Achievements and constraints**. The country programme has played an important role in promoting and supporting processes leading to sectoral achievements in health, nutrition and safe water supply and sanitation. UNICEF support to basic services was concentrated in municipalities with large numbers of displaced persons and high poverty rates. As a consequence of Hurricane Mitch, the programme had to expand its scope to provide services, including psychosocial rehabilitation, to the affected population. Other achievements of the country programme include the attainment of a high level of credibility and the positioning of UNICEF as an authority on child rights. This has contributed to structural change at the legal, political and institutional levels, including juvenile justice and intra-family violence, but also municipal development, maternal and child health, and water supply and sanitation.

54. The main constraints encountered include government weakness in monitoring of goals and serious limitations in access to disaggregated data. Other obstacles relate to the lack of a strategic vision in the country programme, which led to missed opportunities for synergy. The MTR also concluded that the country programme goals were too broad, given UNICEF capabilities in the country, and were not separated from overall counterpart objectives.

55. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. During the MTR, programme aims were redirected towards the promotion and support of a comprehensive national system for the care of children, adolescents and women. Concrete results at the local level must be systematized in order to influence policy formulation at the national level. This new thrust constitutes a key element of the government objective of combating poverty and is an opportunity to expand programmatic integration within the United Nations system.

56. **Country programme management plan**. Reviews concluded that programme objectives and strategies will continue to be valid. However, during the coming years, the programme will adopt a more focused and strategic approach in order to maximize synergies resulting from integrated activities in specific geographic areas.

Guatemala

57. Several external evaluations of the seven country programme projects, carried out with the participation

of technical counterparts, provided the basis for the MTR. During this process, the situation analysis of children and women was updated and a document containing the conclusions and proposed country programme orientation was prepared. Consultations were held with the Secretariat of Planning and other government ministers. At the same time, experts from different sectors were invited to comment on the situation analysis, the factors that negatively affect children, and other relevant issues.

58. **The situation of children and women**. Economic growth in Guatemala has been positive, in spite of the 1998/99 international financial crisis and the effects of Hurricane Mitch and subsequent tropical storms. Yet Guatemala faces many challenges in the economic and social arena: per capita income is approximately $1,580, and 54 per cent of the urban population lives in poverty. The poorest 40 per cent receive 8 per cent of the country's total income, and living conditions of indigenous populations are significantly below average.

59. Hurricane Mitch struck in late 1998 and severely affected low-income populations living in the northern and eastern areas of the country. Nearly one million peasants saw their living conditions further deteriorate due to damage to their productive assets, destruction of raw production materials, or loss of rural employment sources. According to the 1999 *Human Development Report*, damages caused by Mitch amounted to $737.3 million.

60. Since the peace agreements of December 1996, Guatemala has been struggling to consolidate democracy and create a culture of tolerance. Peace accord commitments included constitutional amendments to 50 articles that refer to the rights of indigenous people, as well as issues pertaining to justice, the military, and legislative and judicial bodies. At present, the rights of indigenous peoples are not fully recognized. Although there have been advances in the areas of child survival and development, Guatemala has still not achieved many of the end-decade goals. IMR is 41 per 1,000 live births; access to primary education is not in reach; adult literacy among women is 58 per cent; and 15 per cent of children 10 to 14 years of age perform some kind of wage labour.

61. **Achievements and constraints**. The country programme approved in 1997 contains two programmes and seven projects. The basic services programme includes components for health and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and income generation, while the social policy development programme includes projects in information and communication, social policy and child rights. During the MTR, it became clear that, in spite of advances in these areas, sustainability and cohesiveness were not as strong as they should be.

62. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. Although the current UNICEF country programme was conceived to support the Guatemalan peace process, it was designed before the signing of the accords in 1996. Therefore, the main aim of the MTR was to take into account the intense, and at the same time fragile, dynamics of social change brought about by the internal armed conflict. The MTR made clear that the country programme must undergo significant changes to respond effectively to the evolving situation.

63. MTR findings showed that the country programme has contributed to the development of efficient methods of service delivery to poor and marginalized communities. Other contributions include: the development of new social policies; advances in legislative reform; and stimulation of open discussion of, and interest in, child rights issues in both the media and society. The MTR process also revealed, however, that the country programme had concentrated a large portion of its efforts on service delivery schemes scattered across a wide geographic area, with very limited coverage of beneficiary populations. It had also failed to take adequate advantage of the available opportunities for advancing social policy, which has had a weak impact at the political level; did not cooperate sufficiently with civil society; provided inadequate resources to activities for strengthening the national institutions responsible for protecting child rights and supplying basic social services; failed to produce results beyond the project level due to lack of coordination and integration at the programme level, thus reducing impact; and did not fully integrate into all projects such cross-cutting issues as gender, multiculturalism and disaster prevention and preparedness.

64. The MTR exercise served as an important springboard for an intensive internal reform effort oriented to address the key weaknesses, in the context of a new vision for the country programme. Each project was reconstituted around supply and demand

for rights and services, plus six strategic priorities — the generation of social policies; increase in service coverage; empowerment of civil society and communities; strengthening of institutional capacity; integration of transversal axes of gender, multiculturalism and emergency; and monitoring and evaluation — all to be carried out through integrated teamwork. The reform effort also made possible the preparation of a package of priorities for children requested by the president-elect, including restructuring of the budget to favour the poor and strengthen the family, implementation of the Child and Youth Rights Act, and implementation of education reform to increase bilingual primary education. As a result of these efforts, the country office has developed a new, long-term vision for the 2000-2010 period.

65. **Country programme management plan**. Revisions to the country programme management plan were carried out in a participatory manner, taking into account the results of the MTR. Responding to the new vision and focus on rights-based programming, a revised office structure will be presented to the regional office and headquarters in early 2000. A series of programming and management exercises took place during the year and were executed in a participatory and transparent way, allowing all staff to be involved in developments and decisions. This promoted teamwork and strengthened relationships between programmes and operations.

66. The country management team, composed of all categories of staff and representatives of the Staff Association, participated actively in the MTR. The office work plan was prepared in an innovative fashion, using a computer programme that enters many different types of inputs, and was placed on the server for staff members to view at will. The PROMS team also made substantial contributions in the work process redefinition, redesigning some of the office's most important processes, such as preparation of contracts, travel and payment requests, supply operations and advances/reimbursements to counterparts.

Jamaica

67. The MTR was held between December 1998 and November 1999. In order to streamline the process, the Planning Institute of Jamaica established a Technical and Programme Steering Committee supported by a UNICEF advisory team. The MTR was participatory at every stage; technical teams included the principal government coordinating partners, UNICEF officers and an external consultant. The methodology included focus group and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) sessions, key informant interviews and desk reviews, including consultations with children and youth.

68. **The situation of children and women**. There have been some positive developments, but economic reform and adjustment have had negative impacts on vulnerable sectors. The foremost challenge relates to increasing quality and equity in the provision of basic social services, as well as maintaining child rights-based programming as a priority. Jamaica continues to have a young and essentially poor population. At the end of 1998, 37.6 per cent of the population was under 18 years of age and children are among those most affected by poverty. Educational attainment in general remains strong and access to primary education is universal. Access to early childhood education is approximately 90 per cent. However, children in rural areas are at risk of poor academic performance because of lack of access to food, long walks to schools and the burden of domestic chores.

69. Although general health indicators are encouraging, infant immunization declined from 95.2 per cent in 1996 to 85.4 per cent in 1998. The IMR is estimated at 24.5 per 1,000 live births; maternal mortality rate (MMR) estimates range from 85 to 120 per 100,000 live births. Access to safe water is 81.2 per cent, while access to sanitary facilities is almost universal. According to recent surveys, 48 per cent of children 1 to 4 years of age and 24 per cent of children 5 to 16 years of age are anaemic. Some 20 per cent of adolescents have had sexual intercourse by the age of 11 or 12. More than 40 per cent of sexually active adolescent girls do not use contraceptives, resulting in high rates of teenage pregnancy. Since the first reported HIV/AIDS case in 1982, the incidence has doubled every two years. To date, a total of 3,304 cases have been reported, of which 37.3 per cent were among females.

70. The problems of out-of-school children and adolescents, working children and street children are interrelated. Most child workers are from the inner city and are driven to offer their services in menial tasks for little or no pay. Rural children tend to work in domestic services, vending and farming. The involvement of

children in criminal offences and murders increased from 648 cases in 1994 to 844 cases in 1998.

71. **Achievements and constraints**. The programme has recorded important achievements, particularly in: increased advocacy and mobilization efforts for children; establishment of a social communications strategy to expand visibility of UNICEF programming; creation of awareness and appreciation of the role partnerships play in solidifying actions on behalf of children; assistance in the development of capacity in monitoring and evaluating initiatives in favour of children; training of programme stakeholders and partners in most of the thematic areas covered by the country programme; and promotion of recognition by regional and international partners of the work UNICEF has undertaken in early childhood care, child and youth participation, and assistance to vulnerable groups of children.

72. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR illustrated the challenges of moving away from the vertical programming approach. The discussions recommended a transition towards a more solid.. rights-based programme, supported by efficient and affordable programme and operational structures. Greater focus is required on: the formulation of social policies for children and women; social communications for enhanced and sustained protection of children's and women's rights; and household-level programming.

73. Programme reviews, as well inputs from partners, confirmed that objectives and strategies continue to be valid. Throughout the remainder of the country programme, there will be a need to adhere to basic management and development principles, to allow stronger consistency and continuity between yearly programme planning and country programme goals and objectives. Other recommendations include: development of a flexible programme framework to respond more effectively to evolving national priorities; more attention to sustained capacity-building in strategic project development; strengthening of cross-sectoral support mechanisms, particularly monitoring and evaluation, communication, advocacy and social mobilization; development of new partnerships at the governmental, non-governmental and civil society levels; and promotion of strategic leadership and the documentation and dissemination of best practices.

74. The MTR concluded that programme objectives have been either overly specific or too vague. A lack of consistency between activities and objectives has made it difficult to measure progress. Furthermore, lack of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework has made progress assessment and trend analysis very difficult. Although resource mobilization has been adequate, limited absorptive capacities of partners have contributed to delays in project implementation.

75. **Country programme management plan**. The internal review concluded that the original country programme management plan remains valid. It also noted that while the country programme has been successful in mobilizing resources from a limited pool of donors, recent decisions taken by key Governments to scale down their presence in Jamaica will significantly affect several projects. Financial uncertainties regarding resource mobilization in 2000 have had an impact on staffing. It is therefore imperative that strategies be developed to work with a broader range of private sector and government donors.

Nicaragua

76. Work on the MTR began with an update of the situation analysis by programme officers, and the selection of themes to be examined during the exercise, based on the document "Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Nicaragua", dated June 1999. UNICEF officers, in consultation with counterparts and other colleagues, prepared 14 working papers for discussion. The formal MTR meeting was held in September 1999 and included two days of meetings with national counterparts and one day of internal UNICEF discussion, as well as a round-table meeting with United Nations agencies.

77. Government and non-governmental counterparts, mayors, United Nations and multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, the regional office and headquarters participated in the process. All social ministries were represented by their respective ministers, who presented the progress of each sectoral programme. Participants took part in the analysis of the 14 selected themes. The high level of cabinet participants confirmed the country's commitment to children's rights and to the goals of the World Summit for Children.

78. **The situation of children and women**. In spite of high turnover of key ministerial posts, the country has enjoyed relative political stability since January 1997. In May, the National Assembly approved the Code for Children and Adolescents, adapting national legislation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some sectors of Nicaraguan society still oppose the Code, however, particularly in the area of juvenile justice. There was some reduction in poverty levels between 1993 and 1998, from 50.3 per cent to 47.9 per cent, but the absolute number of poor has increased, and urban-rural inequalities remain significant. The external debt burden is equivalent to $1,317 per capita (10 per cent of GDP).

79. Progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children has been good, in particular in reducing infant and under-five mortality, iodine deficiency disorders, vitamin A deficiencies and low birth weight; promoting breastfeeding; and eradicating polio, neonatal tetanus and measles. In 1999, the Government presented a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee recognized the progress brought about by the Code for Children and Adolescents, but also noted that widespread poverty and socio-economic disparities hamper the fulfilment of children's rights.

80. At the end of 1998, Hurricane Mitch caused an abrupt change in the situation of the country, hitting, in particular, poor rural communities. Eighteen per cent of the Nicaraguan population and approximately 170,000 children were affected. Although the donor response was extremely positive, one year after the disaster, rural communities had not recovered from the loss of farm land and tools, housing and infrastructure.

81. **Achievements and constraints**. Because of the large inflow of funds following Hurricane Mitch, 1999 was an exceptional year for both fund-raising and programme implementation. During the year, the theme of child rights gradually evolved from being an individual, sectoral programme dealing with specific issues to being the underlying theme of all UNICEF interventions in the country. This strengthened child rights approach fostered partnerships with a number of non-traditional counterparts and allies, including the Supreme Court of Justice, the Legislative Assembly, the National Police Force, the Supreme Electoral Council, the National Civil Registry of Persons, mayors' offices, universities and private enterprise.

82. Legal reform is a necessary step, but inadequate in itself to enforce children's rights. In the case of the Code for Children and Adolescents, UNICEF was successful in promoting its formulation and approval. While there is no separate gender component in the country programme, all programmes include gender issues/perspective in their plans, negotiations and implementation. However, gender mainstreaming has at times resulted in a loss of visibility for the theme area.

83. Components of the country programme have achieved a high degree of counterpart ownership and institutionalization. The evaluation of the integrated basic services programme revealed, however, that while activities to increase access to water and sanitation services had excellent results, lack of progress towards decentralization in the country and the threat of politicization of programme activities jeopardized overall effectiveness.

84. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR concluded that the overall structure of the programme remains adequate. The expansion of the theme of child rights is creating the conditions for the formulation of the next country programme, where implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will be a cross-cutting and central theme of all programmes, moving away from a rigid sectoral structure (e.g., health and education).

85. According to the MTR, strategies and objectives remain relevant, as they reflect those areas where the situation of children and women needs to be improved, and are consistent with the UNICEF mandate, policies and priorities. They also reflect the goals of national plans and priorities for children and women. Taking into account the insufficient resources devoted in the country to basic social services, however, and the setbacks produced by Hurricane Mitch, a significant service delivery component is still required to accelerate progress towards the World Summit goals. The country programme also needs to strengthen its communication/social mobilization component.

86. There is a perception in Nicaragua by the public and a number of counterparts that UNICEF is not devoting sufficient attention to certain special protection areas, particularly the rights of children living in the autonomous regions of the Atlantic Coast, children with disabilities, orphans and abandoned and sexually exploited children. Also, increased emphasis

needs to be placed on early childhood care for survival, growth and development. The MTR also identified a gap in national policies for children under the age of three. In response, UNICEF will support the preparation of a national plan of action, based on community and family interventions. Finally, there were comments that future objectives should identify the specific UNICEF added value/impact, clearly linking objectives with indicators and targets.

87. **Country programme management plan**. The MTR did not indicate a need to change the structure of the country programme management plan beyond the modest changes in personnel introduced at the 1999 Programme and Budget Review for the period 2000-2001. The move in March 1999 to a new building shared with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) improved working conditions for UNICEF staff and increased opportunities for inter-agency coordination. The results of an internal audit conducted in 1997 were discussed with all staff. UNICEF staff visits to counterparts have begun to include reviews of their financial systems. A methodology for the selection and evaluation of NGO counterparts was developed for existing and new partners and a self-audit plan began in 1999.

Panama

88. The MTR process spanned the period from November 1998 to October 1999 in the midst of the National Referendum (November 1998) and the presidential election (May 1999). The process was viewed not only as an evaluation and monitoring tool, but also as an instrument to increase awareness and be a direct advocate with the new government authorities, providing an opportunity for stakeholders to renew their commitment to programme objectives and strategies. Technical and policy meetings took place after the elections, with authorities from both the outgoing and new governments. Government counterparts, initially sceptical of UNICEF programming, were fully briefed, and these efforts were ultimately successful.

89. An Executive Committee (UNICEF, under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance) coordinated the MTR. As a consultative body to this process, an inter-institutional and inter-agency MTR task force was organized with the participation of the coordinating bodies of the programmes (Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and Family, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance). Three NGOs also joined the MTR task force as representatives of civil society. During the 9-month process, the Executive Committee held 10 coordination meetings, while the task force met on 6 occasions. Three general workshops took place with the active participation of representatives from the Government (at the technical and policy levels), NGOs and civic clubs.

90. Ministry of Finance technical resources were used during the process; the primary role of UNICEF was to serve as an external facilitator to collect information regarding the implementation of the MPO. UNICEF also provided support to the Ministry of Finance by updating the poverty-related indicator of the situation analysis. The results of the assistance provided by UNICEF are available in a report that was used as a main source for discussion during the three general workshops and is now being used, with the overall results of the MTR, as input for the CCA.

91. **The situation of children and women**. Although the economy grew steadily during the late 1990s, it was severely affected during 1999 by a fall in exports, the internal political situation, the surge in international oil prices, and the rise of interest rates in the United States. Current economic growth is not considered strong enough to improve the level of employment and thus reduce the high incidence of poverty. Approximately 37 per cent of the population live below the poverty line and about 45 per cent of all children between the ages of 10 and 14 are poor. Unemployment, income concentration, inadequacies in education and health services, deficiencies in the land ownership system and limited access to credit are among the underlying causes of poverty. According to the 1999 *Human Development Report*, Panama dropped from a high human development category in 1998 to a mid-level category in 1999. This could be attributed in part to the availability of new data on poverty levels provided by a 1997 survey of living standards.

92. Panama is on track to achieving many end-decade goals, particularly those concerning measles, neonatal tetanus and polio. Although under-five mortality has been substantially reduced, high rates persist in rural and indigenous areas, and special efforts are needed to decrease mortality from diarrhoea. Insufficient progress has also been registered in the fight against acute respiratory infections, maternal mortality and malnutrition and in efforts to promote universal access

to primary education. The recent approval of Law No. 40 on Juvenile Justice, a law compliant with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, was an important victory for children's rights.

93. **Achievements and constraints**. The current country programme, the second in Panama, includes programmes on the rights of children and women, municipal and social development, education and life skills. At a technical level, achievements include the formulation and ratification of Law No. 40 on Juvenile Justice, the establishment of a group of local professionals trained in children's rights, and contributions towards the creation of the Institute for Women at the University of Panama. The sustainability of the programme has been fostered through the institutionalization of different initiatives, including the Out-of-School Youth Programme, the approval of a law for universalization of iodized salt; and the creation of the National Committee for monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the fact that service delivery was not an explicit strategy in the MPO, it has played an important role in mobilizing local resources to increase coverage of indigenous populations.

94. Limitations encountered include: absence of a social agenda, the lack of institutionalization of programmes and projects, and the persistence of a sectoral approach to the situation of children and women, resulting in duplication of efforts and reduction of cost-effectiveness. There is also the absence of a monitoring mechanism, and a limited administrative capacity of some government counterparts in the Project Plan of Action implementation process.

95. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. At the final MTR workshop held in October, there was consensus that overall country programme objectives remain relevant and adequate. The following areas need emphasis, however: the formulation of public policies with a rights and gender focus; strengthening of social communication for children; design of a mechanism for monitoring child rights; revision of coverage vis-à-vis the new province of Gnogbe-Bnugle; and special efforts to implement the education programme. It was recommended that progress indicators for each objective be established during the remainder of the programme period.

96. The importance of creating strategic alliances based on common interests for implementing children's rights was also stressed. The situation of women and children and the sharp disparities in Panama require a robust UNICEF presence for at least a third five-year programme cycle (2002 to 2006). During the course of the country programme, the question of "graduation", as contained in Executive Board decision 1997/18 (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1) arose. Consequently, Panama needs to secure a stable funding base for at least the next seven years.

97. **Country programme management plan**. The main limitation to fulfilment of the country programme management plan was related to the fund-raising capacity of the office vis-à-vis the new staff structure. Three staff posts were converted from regular resource to other resource funding. This was done without making the needed provision of locating funds to assure a more flexible transition to the personnel structure of the 1997-2001 cooperation programme. It was also acknowledged that demands on existing staff have been high. Information technology personnel had to be contracted during 1999 in order to strengthen and fulfil PROMS demands. This additional full-time support was not foreseen in the preparation of the personnel structure. It was also recommended that the office have a full-time, private sector fund-raising post.

Uruguay

98. The MTR was carried out in September 1999. Participants included government representatives, NGOs and the UNICEF team. NGO participation in this process was a new initiative, designed to involve civil society in country programme implementation.

99. **The situation of children and women**. Uruguay's economy grew steadily between 1990 and 1997, leading to a 3.4 per cent per capita annual growth in GDP, accompanied by a 50 per cent reduction in the number of poor households. Nonetheless, the international financial crisis caused the economy to suffer a strong deceleration during 1999. Uruguay's basic indicators for children are quite favourable. The IMR, which was 30 per 1,000 live births in 1984, now stands at 16 per 1,000. Low weight among children under one year of age has diminished and educational coverage has increased at all levels. Uruguay was the first country of the region to achieve universal access to pre-school education for children aged four and five. Because of positive performance in a variety of areas,

Uruguay is well placed in the Human Development Index.

100. Notwithstanding progress made, Uruguay has persistent problems that strongly affect children and adolescents. About 40 per cent of children are born to poor families. Child labour affects a significant percentage of young children. School performance and access to education vary significantly among children from different income groups, and a large number of children and adolescents are kept in state institutions. The incidence of adolescent pregnancy is high, and 39 per cent of families abuse their children in some way. Women are also frequently victims of domestic violence. Unemployment is higher among women, and average wages are lower for women than for men. Moreover, women have limited access to decision-making positions, whether in the political, social or economic spheres.

101. **Achievements and constraints**. The main objective of UNICEF, where the greatest achievements have taken place, is the promotion of new legislation for children. UNICEF has worked to promote the establishment of guarantees for children in conflict with the law, the modification of the birth registration system to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the regulation of adoption procedures. Although significant advances have been made, cultural barriers and private interests have impeded achieving optimal results.

102. The country programme has succeeded in sensitizing the Government and civil society to the issue of child labour and has improved statistics and knowledge on the subject. UNICEF has worked jointly with the Ministry of Public Health to support the creation of 18 child-friendly hospitals and health centres, increasing the number of births occurring in child-friendly establishments. Close relationships have been established between UNICEF and the Government, as well as with social organizations that work with children. The organization is recognized in the country as a transparent and independent entity, strongly committed to promoting the rights of children, adolescents and women.

103. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. During the MTR, it was proposed that the programme shift from funding several small projects without significant impact to implementing broader activities. These include influencing social policies and promoting cultural change in favour of the rights of children and women. It was also suggested that UNICEF design a system of indicators to evaluate impact, processes, innovation and legitimacy of programming. In the remaining years of the country programme, counterparts should be trained in order to build their capacity to design and implement sustainable projects.

104. **Country programme management plan**. The UNICEF office in Uruguay has only two posts (a bilingual secretary and a project officer) and a number of external consultants. Restrictions in the administrative budget affect programme implementation. Although fund-raising has had encouraging results, there has not been enough local fund-raising to support the country programme budget.

Major country programme evaluations

Regionally prominent themes

105. Each year, the prominent monitoring and evaluation themes in the region include a mix of those seen in prior years and those emerging as new areas of interest. In 1999, the following five themes can be cited as efforts to improve the availability and use of data in critical areas.

106. **Understanding the dynamics of exclusion and vulnerability**. Country offices are investing in detailed statistical analyses of national surveys (such as the World Bank-sponsored Living Standards Surveys) to determine which groups are excluded and why. Studies involving quantitative and qualitative methods are documenting how each group is marginalized. Representative examples include Nicaragua's situation analysis for the excluded Atlantic Coast region and Ecuador's monitoring of the impact of economic decline on the most vulnerable.

107. Increasing efforts in the areas of human rights and gender. Data generation activities are responding to the UNICEF emphasis on gender and human rights issues. Increasingly, UNICEF is expanding beyond classic sectoral work into multidisciplinary, multi-partner efforts. In 1999, for example, the Colombia office initiated a project to reconstruct the history of decade-long efforts to combat the high incidence of street children and child prostitution, with an emphasis

on identifying reasons for success and failure that are evident only over very long periods.

108. **National social indicator systems**. Governments have begun to ask UNICEF to advise them on the use of indicators to monitor national social development, as they recognize that existing indicators concerning the rights of children and women are incomplete. In addition, progressive Governments are permitting critical commentary, as well as public exposure of data. In Costa Rica, for example, an independent observer monitors national data and rates performance in the area of rights.

109. **Capacity-building at the subnational level**. As Governments in the region decentralize funding and other responsibilities, there is increasing need for, and interest in, subnational (normally municipality-based) capacity-building for social data collection and analysis. UNICEF is supporting efforts to establish or upgrade local statistical units, integrate their work with that of central-level offices, and employ the data for programming purposes. In 1999, the Dominican Republic had exemplary initiatives at national and subnational levels, which now cover 24 of the 30 provinces.

110. **UNICEF-certified municipalities**. The Mayors, Friends of Children, Initiative has been widely implemented in the region. In 1999, a new innovation — the development of criteria to designate a municipality as child-friendly — was implemented in at least three country offices. Municipalities must agree to reach budget and programming targets to attain this designation, which is jointly monitored. The effort depends on the development of good indicators and adequate local data collection systems. For example, in the Brazilian State of Ceara, 93 per cent of eligible municipalities committed to raising their social indicators to reach the regional pattern by the year 2000.

Major evaluations in the region

111. Two evaluations addressing sectoral health programmes were innovative in ways that are often recommended, yet rarely accomplished. In the Dominican Republic, a six-year, community-based vertical programme was evaluated to see if it could be transformed into a more broad-based, multi-intervention effort. In Nicaragua, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) examined an integrated health services project in a remote region to evaluate the UNICEF country office's performance, among other critical elements.

112. **Evaluation of Community Oral Rehydration Units in Dominican Republic**. Community Oral Rehydration Units (CORU) are community-based diarrhoea prevention and treatment centres, which have functioned since 1994 as part of the national diarrhoea control programme. With the reorientation of health services towards an integrated model, and in response to the demand of NGOs and communities to expand the scope of CORU, an evaluation was undertaken to determine if the initiative could be transformed into Community Health Houses. The evaluation sought to identify results, impacts and sustainability.

113. A national survey was conducted in which five questionnaires were used to collect data on: the views of animators and health workers; conditions in the CORU; and knowledge, attitudes and practices of mothers with children under the age of five. Non-CORU communities were sampled as a control group. Questionnaires used flexible, open-ended questions, and impact was determined by calculating community-level diarrhoea rates over a two-week period. Participants included UNICEF, Plan International, a leading national NGO research agency, the Ministry of Health and PAHO.

114. Findings were largely positive. CORU services are highly valued and heavily used by those who are aware of them. Animators and health workers had strong links with communities, and CORU technical capacities were very good. Maternal knowledge of proper treatment was high and the propensity to seek treatment was very good. The main weakness was mothers' lack of knowledge on the frequency of feedings. Other weaknesses were in follow-up and monitoring, and in refresher training for animators. Awareness of the initiative was found to be low, especially among those with little formal schooling. Interestingly, the number of community animators — five per health unit — was thought to be too high for effective supervision, and a reduction to two per unit was recommended. In addition, support from higher-level health systems was insufficient, especially in training and in information/social communication activities.

115. Based on the evaluation, specific recommendations were made for project follow-up. A separate study of community members, health staff and health authorities provided recommendations on how Community Health Houses should function. The results of the two efforts have been combined and Community Health Houses are currently in the design phase. The project will institute a number of efforts not heretofore interrelated: primary health care, Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, the Integrated Health Actions Strategy, the "Dignified Community" effort, and Facts for Life. A recommendation was also made to pursue a measured community participatory process, so the Health Houses would not become an initiative "planted" in communities.

116. **Evaluation of SIDA support to the Nicaraguan health sector, 1992-1998**. This external evaluation assessed SIDA support to an integrated health programme in a remote border region and in the under-privileged Atlantic Coast region, jointly administered by UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO)/PAHO and the Government. Evaluation objectives were very broad and included: (a) achievement and sustainability (impact, beneficiary participation, inter-agency cooperation, gender aspects, monitoring, future vision, decentralization); (b) role of UNICEF/PAHO (funds administration, monitoring, capacity-building, cost-effectiveness, donor reporting); and (c) health care quality in focus areas (participation, technical capacity, management, infrastructure, coordination). The methodology involved record review, key informant interviews, site visits/observation, sponsored research, and a day-long participatory critique by project members and interested outsiders. The evaluation was led by three SIDA consultants and benefited from extensive support from a variety of donors, NGOs and government employees.

117. The findings responded to each of the objectives, including hard-to-assess issues like gender mainstreaming and the efficiency of UNICEF coordination. The evaluation concluded that collaboration of UNICEF and PAHO was positive, as was their overall role in the health programme. Health indicators improved, along with local administrative and technical capacity. And the system was unusually good at adapting to such emergencies as Hurricane Mitch.

118. The evaluation examined the role and contribution of UNICEF and PAHO in technical assistance, in the administration of SIDA funds and in capacity-building. The SIDA report found that capacity was expanded at numerous levels and noted that UNICEF/PAHO supported more activities at the subnational level than had been originally planned, due to weakness within the ministry. One of the evaluators who had followed the project since 1992 noted that capacities were improving and fund management was considered to be professional and responsible. However, it was recommended that the overly complicated financial reporting requirements of both PAHO and UNICEF be simplified.

119. Regarding administrative and operational costs in relation to functions, and in relation to other agencies performing the same functions in donor-financed projects in the health sector, the report noted that PAHO retained 23 per cent of the donor funds for administrative and operational costs, versus just 13 per cent for UNICEF. It was recommended that SIDA be more flexible in negotiations and that a joint management group be formed to avoid unnecessary duplication in administration.

120. As regards the function and quality of coordination and reporting mechanisms among partners, SIDA reported that coordination meetings and donor reports were conducted on time and with effective participation, and that there were noticeable improvements over past projects. However, the preparation and contents were questioned by many of those interviewed, leading to a set of specific recommendations.

121. SIDA concluded that the project merits continued support. A third phase will be financed for 2000-2004, in order to transfer managerial responsibilities to the Health Ministry under the continued technical support of UNICEF and WHO/PAHO. SIDA also identified several aspects within the Programme for Decentralized Health Services (PROSILAIS) that can be applied to other SIDA programmes, confirming that UNICEF efforts are creating innovative health programming.

Conclusion

122. MTRs and evaluations demonstrated widespread implementation of projects, as well as thorough reflection on content, processes, structure, constraints and opportunities. The appropriateness of existing

programmes was widely confirmed by the review process. It was found that UNICEF offices and their counterparts have made significant inroads into how the rights-based approach can be more fully realized. Attainment of the goals of the World Summit for Children was evident in all of UNICEF work in the region. MTRs also revealed, however, that the regional office was overtaxed in the support it needed to provide to the MTR process in 12 countries.